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This Week at Magdalen Road church we started a new series leading up to Easter, in Johns Gospel. We focused in on 18v1-14.

We looked at the accounts of Judas' betrayal of Jesus in the garden from two different perspectives: 'google street view' and 'google maps'!

1. The Garden: the human perspective

Jesus and his disciples have arrived in Gethsemane, a local walled garden of olive trees when suddenly they are reunited with Judas. But now it's not just Judas he comes with a detachment of soldiers as well as officials from the temple.

This is an unlikely alliance as they would have been largely enemies, but are united in their desire to get rid of Jesus. It's a story of betrayal from Judas, but also of misunderstanding from the disciples. As Peter uses a sword to chop off the high priests servants right ear. It *feels* like an eyewitness account with both the attention to detail but also an honesty as the disciples embarrassingly miss the point again as to the kind of king Jesus has come to be.

However to only see things from the Google Street view level would mean we miss what John is trying to tell us through this account.

2. The Garden: the divine perspective

It is clear that Jesus is still in control at this point. We uncovered six little gems in the mud and the mess, that reveal Jesus' control:

1. They go to a garden that Judas knows well. Jesus could've gone to a different garden, or hidden, but rather goes to a place where he knows he'll be found. Gardens feature highly in God's dealings with his world - it all began (and went wrong) in the garden where temptation led to a denial and a doubt of God's word - God's story ends in the garden (or at least a Garden City) a place of

blessing. This garden though, must be passed through for the final garden to be a reality.

2. v4- "Knowing all that was going to happen to him". Jesus is fully aware of what's going on-and John-writing later-put the pieces together and blurts that out for us in case we missed it.

3. In v5 to 6 there is a strange response as Jesus answers the question as to who he is. He literally, deliberately says 'I am' and they fall to the ground because only God could use that name of himself. Jesus is claiming divinity by using God's name. Earlier in John they tried to kill him for just that.

4. In v8 to 9 we see the fulfillment of Jesus not losing his disciples as he prayed for them in v12 of chapter 17. He *is* able to preserve and protect them as he promised to. We can trust him and lean on him.

5. In v11 we read of the cup that the Father has given him. This verse shows both that the Father is in charge, but also something of what Jesus' task entails. The cup refers to the God's anger (see Isaiah 51v17 for example). Our just, holy and pure God will rightly deal with sin. Jesus will take his anger.

6. v14 - At the end of the passage John nudges us to remind us of Caiaphas from back in chapter 11. He spoke more than he knew as he had said it would 'be good for one man to die for the people'. John reminds us of this because he wants us to not miss that Jesus will die, taking the Fathers anger upon himself, for his people. Jesus will be our substitute.

Here are some questions to start the discussion in your group.

- Have a look at the end of John 20. Why does John write? Why can we trust what he says? What would you say to somebody who said that John had an agenda?
- Are there any aspects of this account that surprise you?
- Which of the little gems that John leaves for us strike you the most? How do they show us that Jesus is in charge? How do they reveal to us what he came to do?
- Here we see that even in the darkest and seemingly messiest times Jesus is still in charge-how does this apply to us?
- Where do we see the reality of the trustworthiness of Jesus within this passage?